**Association of College and Research Libraries**
**& American Library Association**
**Distance Learning Section**

Characteristics and Challenges of Distance Learning Librarians:

Report to the Distance Learning Section

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Distance Learning Section Statistics Committee

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Characteristics and Challenges of Distance Learning Librarians

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In 2005, 270 members of the Distance Learning Section of the Association of College and Research Libraries responded to a survey conducted by the section's Statistics Committee. This survey collected data regarding the members' professional needs, responsibilities, research interests and attendance at professional development programs. Respondents reported that learning new technologies, instruction, program implementation and assessment, collaboration, outreach, and administration are the most pressing issues facing distance learning librarians. These responses highlight key programming and research endeavors for the section.

## *INTRODUCTION*

The mission of the Distance Learning Section (DLS) of the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) is focused on promoting and supporting library services for distance learning programs at institutions of higher education (ACRL Distance Learning Section, 1999). Building upon the work of preceding ACRL organizations, the section has sponsored a wide range of activities to further its mission, including conference programs, the development of standards and guidelines, and providing networking opportunities to practicing professionals (Fredricksen, 2004). In an effort to measure members' interest in these endeavors, DLS developed a questionnaire inquiring about the section's utility and programming initiatives, members' professional development needs, and methods the section could employ to address those needs. Using this instrument, the DLS Statistics Committee conducted a survey of the membership in the summer of 2005.

## *LITERATURE REVIEW*

In 2004, Fredricksen chronicled the history of the Distance Learning Section, including the founding of an Extended Campus Discussion group in 1981, the formation of an official Extended Campus Library Services Section (ECLSS) of ACRL in 1990, and the adoption of its current name in 1998. After examining the section's records, Fredricksen outlined the growth of the organization, starting with 99 librarians invited to the first discussion group in 1981, growing to an ECLSS membership of 204 in 1991, and culminating with a total of 1,504 DLS members in 2003.

Several authors have identified skill sets and issues that are of particular interest to distance learning librarians. In 2000, Ellison stressed the importance of being able to conduct a formal needs assessment and argued that taking a distance education course is excellent preparation to practice in this field. Drawing upon information from 27 practicing librarians, Jones (2002) advised new distance librarians to be ready for assessment, to keep current with technology, and to build relationships with various stakeholders, such as campus administration,

instructional faculty, and other librarians.   After reviewing published literature and current practice, Gandhi (2003) stressed the importance of marketing, outreach, and collaboration with teaching faculty and with institutional administration.   Haynes (2002) echoes many of these themes.

A number of research studies have been undertaken to better understand distance librarians' working lives; these studies have employed various means by which to sample practitioners.  A survey by Newsome and Rosen (1995) uncovered issues relating to professional isolation, communication, and professional development among off campus librarians.   Survey participants were drawn from the Off-Campus Library Services Directory (Jacob, 1993), the attendee list from the sixth Off-Campus Library Services Conference, and from the OFFCAMP-L listserv[1] (henceforth, OFFCAMP).   Reiten and Fritts (2004) queried Off-Campus Library Services Conference attendees in order to discover patterns in their career paths and administrative roles.  Similarly, Washburn (2006) examined distance librarians' career choices and experiences through a survey of OFFCAMP subscribers.

Based on a survey of 76 Association of Research Libraries (ARL) institutions, Cassner and Adams (2004) reported that a majority integrate distance services throughout the library rather than having a stand-alone division for remote learner support.  Yang's (2005) survey of distance education coordinators at ARL libraries found that most of them had multiple job responsibilities, devoted less than one-half of their time to distance services, and reported to a reference/instruction team rather than supervising an independent unit.  In separate surveys of OFFCAMP subscribers, Washburn (2006) as well as Cassner and Adams (2006) reported that about one-half of responding librarians spent 50% of their time or more on distance librarianship issues.  Two-thirds of the respondents in Washburn's study reported being in the profession fewer than six years.

A later study by Cassner and Adams (2006) found that distance learning librarians used a variety of resources to address their professional development needs, including OFFCAMP (91%), journal articles (85%), conferences (79%), monographs (53%), credit courses (50%), and university workshops (33%).   Pressing issues among distance librarians included time management and the level of funding; responses suggested the need for further professional development in a variety of areas, including technology, instructional design, marketing, Web

design, and budgeting/administration.

Reiten and Fritts (2006) identified key issues in distance learning librarianship by analyzing the content of 358 papers presented at Off-Campus Library Service conferences held from 1986 through 2004.  The most frequently covered topics included administration and planning, uses of technology, model programs, and assessment.

## *METHODOLOGY*

In consultation with other DLS members, the section's Statistics Committee drafted a 23 question survey instrument, addressing work environment and structure, interaction with the section, attendance at professional conferences, and professional needs and interests.  Seven questions were  multiple-choice.  Another seven questions prompted a free-text response.  Nine questions solicited multiple-choice responses along with a free-text "other" option.  In total, sixteen questions offered the opportunity for an open-ended text response.

Two DLS members, Laura Ramirez and Johanna Tuñón of Nova Southeastern University, uploaded the questions into Surveyor, an online survey tool.  On June 10, 2005, the ACRL central office sent an electronic mail message to all section members, inviting participation in the survey and providing the survey's URL.  Invitations were also distributed via the OFFCAMP electronic mail discussion list, in the Spring, 2005 edition of the *DLS Newsletter*, and at the Annual Conference of the American Library Association (ALA) at the end of June, 2005.

The survey was available online from June 10 through July 18, 2005.  During that time, a total of 270 members submitted a response to at least part the questionnaire.  ACRL records indicate 1187 individuals were members of DLS in June, 2005, yielding a response rate of 23%. Of the respondents, a majority (146) completed the entire questionnaire, and three-quarters (203) answered all of questions except for three open-ended queries at the end of the survey.

The resulting data file created by the Surveyor software included the distribution of responses for each multiple choice question as well as the text of each entry typed into an open-ended text response box.  The committee developed themes and coded the free-text responses, and assigned each response to one or more  appropriate categories.

At the January 2006 Midwinter Meeting of the American Library Association, the DLS

Executive Committee indicated that the section's committees would benefit from an edited data set, accompanied by a summary of the quantitative and qualitative responses.  After removing all information that could identify a specific individual from the text of each response, the Statistics Committee distributed the full-text responses and summary statistics via the World Wide Web (ACRL DLS Statistics Committee, 2006), and presented the results to the DLS Executive Committee at the ALA Annual Conference in June, 2006.

## *FINDINGS*

The survey included questions regarding the local institutional environment of responding members, as well as their involvement with the section and other outside professional organizations.  Several questions solicited members' professional needs, interests, and challenges of distance, and inquired as to how the section could help address these issues.

### *Institutional and Professional Environment*

Almost all of the respondents (90%) indicate they regularly dedicate some time each week to library services for distance learners.  However, only a minority (20%) normally spend at least half of their time on these duties, while most (56%) usually dedicate less than one-quarter of their working hours to distance services.  (See Table 1.)  Indeed, just under one-half (49%) listed distance library services as a "major responsibility," fewer than those selecting "Reference/Instruction" (60%).   In addition, a sizable number also indicated library administration (39%) and collection development (31%) as major aspects of their position.

TABLE 1. Percent of Average Week Dedicated to Distance Library Services

| Percent of Average Work Week | Number of Librarians (n = 267) |
|---|---|
| 100% | 14 (5%) |
| 76 – 99% | 16 (6%) |
| 51 - 75% | 25 (9%) |
| 26 – 50% | 36 (13%) |
| 1 – 25% | 150 (56%) |
| 0% | 26 (10%) |

The administrative structure for distance library services reflects the diversity of professional duties preformed by distance learning librarians.  Over three-quarters of the respondents (77%) indicate their institutions do not have a stand-alone distance library services unit, i.e., that such services are incorporated into other library divisions.  In addition, one-quarter indicated their distance library services receive some or all of their funding from units outside of the library, such as the distance learning unit on campus.

Members' professional interests, as measured by membership in library organizations outside of ACRL, extend into topics that are not specifically focused on distance services. Almost one-half of all respondents reported membership in another ALA division, relatively evenly split between participation in the associations for Reference and User Services (23%), Library Administration and Management (19%), Library Information Technology (19%), and ALA Divisions dedicated to other topics (17%).  In addition, a majority of the respondents (61%) belong to a state or local library association.

*Challenges, Needs and Interest*

The distance learning librarians surveyed repeatedly mentioned several topics when identifying professional challenges, needs, and interests.  When asked to select from a list of research interests presented by the survey, a majority chose instruction–/–information literacy (61%) and Web-based library services (56%).  Sizable numbers also selected collaboration with faculty (42%), reference services (41%), assessment (35%), and administration (31%). With the

exception of reference, all of these topics also appeared in the list of top ten major job challenges, continuing education needs, and suggestions for DLS discussions and programs.

Of the major job challenges identified, distance learning librarians mentioned an inadequate level of resources the most often.   Other top challenges identified include issues related to information technology, instruction, collaboration with faculty, outreach to students, and relationships with other non-library units.   (See Table 2.)   Two of these categories, information technology and instruction, also appeared at the top of the list of continuing education needs, along with the need to stay current with best practices and research.  (See Table 3.)

TABLE 2. Major Job Challenges of Distance Learning Librarians

| Category of Job Challenge | Number of Librarians ( n = 238 ) |
|---|---|
| Availability of Resources (Budget, Staff, Time) | 88   (37%) |
| Outreach and Marketing | 75   (32%) |
| Information Technology | 64   (27%) |
| Instruction & Information Literacy | 53   (22%) |
| Relationships with Units Outside of the Library (Administration, Distance Learning, etc.) | 52   (22%) |
| Working with Faculty | 47   (20%) |
| Collections | 28   (12%) |
| Management/Administrative Issues | 24   (10%) |
| Assessment | 19   (8%) |
| Keeping up with Best Practices and Current Research | 19   (8%) |
| Other Categories | 44   (18%) |
| Not Applicable, Don't Know, None | 6   (3%) |

TABLE 3. Continuing Education Needs of Distance Learning Librarians

| Category of Continuing Education Need | Number of Librarians (n = 169) |
|---|---|
| Information Technology | 62    (37%) |
| Keeping Current with Best Practices and Research | 38    (22%) |
| Instruction & Information Literacy | 35    (21%) |
| Outreach and Marketing | 33    (20%) |
| Availability of Resources (Budget, Staff, Time) | 29    (17%) |
| Collections | 20    (12%) |
| Working with Faculty | 19    (11%) |
| Management/Administrative Issues | 19    (11%) |
| Assessment | 13    (8%) |
| Relationships with Units Outside of the Library (Administration, Distance Learning, etc.) | 13    (8%) |
| Other Categories | 11    (7%) |
| Not Applicable / Don't Know/ None | 13    (8%) |

*Conference Attendance and Other Continuing Education*

In the two years preceding the survey, most distance learning librarians (67%) traveled to a professional conference or continuation education function to support professional development needs related to distance library services.  The rest participated in online training only (4%) or reported no travel or continuing education (28%) related to these needs.  Only a minority (36%) of the respondents attended programs specifically devoted to distance library services, while the other conference attendees (29%) only attended programs with a focus outside of distance services.

Just under one-half of the respondents (49%) had attended at least one ALA Annual Conference or Midwinter Meeting since 2003 (these are the traditional venues for DLS events). A majority (68%) planned to attend an ALA Midwinter or Annual meeting during the two years following the survey.  A significant number (47%) participated in other conferences and programs to address their continuing education needs related to distance library services.  These

programs varied greatly, as over 40 specific events were reported, with the most common being the Off-Campus Library Services (17%) and the ACRL National (9%) conferences.

### *Role of DLS in Meeting Members' Needs*

The survey asked members to suggest topics that would be appropriate for ALA conference programs and discussions sponsored by DLS. The respondents mentioned similar issues as those identified under major job challenges and continuing education interests. Information technology and instruction were listed most often, each by at least one-fifth of the respondents, as desirable topics for these DLS events. Of the 130 respondents who had attended an ALA annual conference or meeting in the two years prior to the survey, sixty seven (52%) indicated they had also attended a DLS program. Most of the ALA attendees who did not attend a DLS event indicated that a lack of time and conflicts with other sessions were the reasons for not participating.

When asked what the section could offer to enhance the value of membership, one-quarter of the respondents suggest more information on current tips and best practices would be helpful. The next most common response, given by 21% of the respondents, indicates the section's current activities are appropriate, and more of the same would be helpful.

### *Interaction with the Distance Learning Section*

Most members (81%) reported reading the DLS newsletter to keep abreast of section activities. Less than one-half (41%) mentioned the OFFCAMP listserv, and fewer (21%) mentioned participation in section meetings at ALA Annual and Midwinter. When asked to identify one major benefit of DLS membership, more than one-half (54%) chose professional development, and most of the rest (30%) listed networking. One-fifth of the respondents indicated they had served on a section committee, and 9% had served as a committee chair.

### *DISCUSSION*

The Distance Learning Section is the largest professional organization dedicated to

supporting and promoting distance library services.  With 23% of the membership responding to the survey, and 90% of the respondents indicating they devote some time each week to supporting distance library services, the survey results provide a glimpse into the general environment of and trends in distance learning librarianship.

*Relationship to Previous Studies*

Overall, most of the findings of the current survey accord with previous research.  When the results do differ, however, the differences may be attributable to the variations in, and the size of, the population surveyed.  Previous research has examined smaller, more focused populations of distance learning librarians.  Cassner and Adams' 2004 study (N=76) as well as Yang's research (2005) (N=62) collected responses from ARL libraries only.  Two more recent publications, including Washburn's paper (2006) and Cassner and Adam's 2006 study each drew just over 100 responses from invitations sent to OFFCAMP electronic mail discussion list, a population of between 650 and 675 subscribers.

The current study received 270 responses from invitations delivered to 1187 members of the Distance Learning Section.  Even though OFFCAMP is an important communications tool among DLS members, fewer than 700 people subscribed to it in 2005, less than 60% of the total number of section members.  Indeed, less than one-half (41%) of the respondents in this study identified OFFCAMP as a resource used to stay current with section activities.

It is likely this study includes a higher percentage of section members for whom distance learning is not the major job responsibility.  While these librarians do provide distance library service and are members DLS, many spend a relatively small portion of their professional time working in this area, and are therefore less likely to devote energy to reading electronic mail from a distance learning discussion list like OFFCAMP.  The findings of this study, therefore, are likely weighted more heavily than previous studies towards smaller programs, which devote only part of a librarian's time to support services for distance learners.

*Involvement in Multiple Areas of the Profession*

Previous studies have found that most distance learning librarians report to a non-distance

unit (Cassner & Adams, 2004; Yang, 2005), many spend more than one-half of their time on duties other than distance services (Cassner & Adams, 2006; Washburn, 2006; Yang, 2005), and have difficulty managing the time required to address all of these responsibilities (Cassner & Adams, 2006).  All of these phenomena are even more pronounced in the broader population measured in this study. (See Figure 1.)  Supporting distance learners is often an additional, rather than the central, responsibility for the librarians in this field.  Since a considerable number of the respondents felt they received an inadequate level of resources (e.g., staffing, budget, and time) to support their program, many distance learning librarians appear to be feeling the strain of wearing so many different professional "hats."

FIGURE 1.  Percentage of Time Devoted to Distance Library Services



**Percent of Work Week Devoted to Distance Library Services**
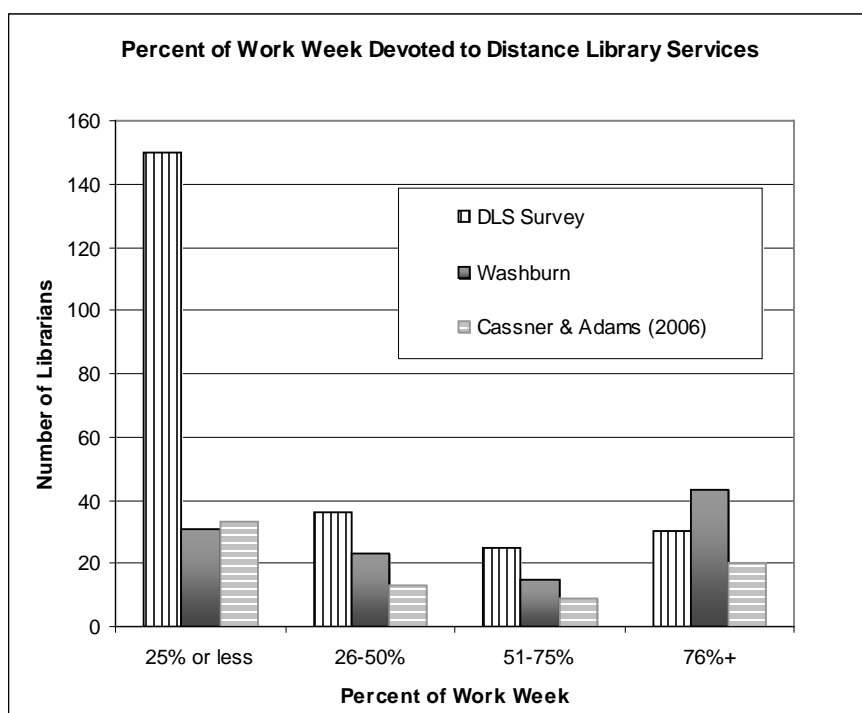
## Key Challenges, Needs, and Interests

A few key themes arose in the free-text responses that accord with previous studies, while reflecting the diversity of members' working lives.  When asked for ideas for future DLS programs, large numbers of responses centered around new and emerging technologies; outreach and marketing; information literacy and instruction; and administrative issues.

Many of these themes appeared again when participants were asked for their most pressing continuing education needs. Of the 169 responses to this question, 62 (37%) regarded technology as very important. Responses in this area ranged from simply keeping abreast of new tools, e.g., blogs and virtual reference tools, to issues relating to technical support. Issues of developing and integrating library instruction, as well as promotion and marketing, were each found in at least thirty-three responses (20%). Administrative concerns like funding, staffing, advocacy, program assessment, and time management also appeared in significant numbers.

Specific challenges noted by respondents across several questions include an inadequate level of resources and problematic relationships with non-library units, such as the institution's administration, information technology department, and distance learning unit. These themes are consistent with those found in previous research.

"Assessment" was a common continuing education theme; this accords with findings by Ellison, (2000), Jones (2002), and Reiten and Fritts (2006). However, themes regarding equity of service for distance students (Washburn, 2006) were mentioned less often in this study. Issues of copyright were also reported less often than expected.

### *Professional Development*

A majority of current members cited professional development as the primary benefit of membership in the Distance Learning Section; a significant number of respondents reported that they look to DLS to stay current with research, trends, and "best practices," e.g., in online instruction or technology integration. These responses indicate that the section's ongoing focus should include the support and professional development of its members.

### *Collaboration and Cooperation*

Many of the professional challenges and interests of DLS members, including information technology and instruction, are frequently addressed by other organizations, such as the Library and Information Technology Association or the Instruction Section of ACRL. Similarly, many members report their major job responsibilities include reference, collection development, and even library administration. Not surprisingly, some members report that other

programs compete with DLS events for their attention at ALA meetings.  Greater coordination and collaboration between DLS and relevant professional organizations might allow distance learning librarians to attend programs that speak to their needs, while also enabling them to attend relevant DLS programs.  In addition, the data gathered through this survey suggest areas where DLS can design high-interest programs that address issues of interest to a wide range of ALA attendees.   These data might align with those collected by the ALA during its 2006 survey and suggest future collaborations and events.

*Distance Learning Tools*

Many distance learning librarians have very limited support for travel to professional development programs.  To supplement conference programs and discussions, distance learning librarians have utilized a variety of online tools, including the OFFCAMP discussion list, an online *Bibliography of Distance Library Services* (Slade, 2005)*,* and the resources available via the DLS website (http://caspian.switchinc.org/~distlearn/)*.*  Many have also participated in online professional development programs, including virtual conferences and online courses offered by ACRL.  Increased use of and access to distance learning tools, such as online meetings, virtual conferences, and electronic instruction programs, would help address the continuing education needs of librarians who are unable to travel for professional development.

*Current Research and Best Practices*

Staying current with new research and best practices is challenging, even for those with support to attend professional conferences.  Several respondents suggested it would be helpful if experienced librarians could identify best practices for new distance learning librarians, and review and highlight the best ideas from current research for all librarians.

Some projects are beginning to address these needs.  The ACRL online course "All Users are Local" introduces best practices and standards; it was mentioned by several respondents as especially useful for librarians new to distance services.  The section's development of a Wiki-based bibliography, continuing the work begun by Slade (2005), will identify and highlight recently published studies relevant to distance learning librarians.   Adaptations of new

technology could expand on the services provided by these projects. For example, reports on unpublished data presented at conferences or summaries of new practices announced at discussion groups could be added to an online bibliography of research, expanding its coverage from published literature to the wealth of knowledge possessed by practicing librarians.

### Networking

After professional development, the next largest group of respondents listed networking as the primary benefit of DLS membership. The section provides the ability for distance learning librarians to connect with each other through virtual means, such as the OFFCAMP discussion list, and conference events, including discussion group meetings and social activities. Here, too, implementation of new technologies may enhance these efforts. The ALA Online Communities initiative is an example of the potential of new technologies to foster connections between and communication among peers.

### Advocacy

In fulfillment of its mission, the Distance Learning Section has demonstrated leadership in the field, representing the field's interests through programs for its members and advocacy on behalf of the field in the broader academic community. The ACRL Guidelines for Distance Learning Library Services (2006), developed and revised by the section, are a key tool for librarians trying to provide equitable service to distance learners. However, practicing distance learning librarians have identified an inadequate level of resources, including funding, staffing, and time, as their top job challenge. To support the principles outlined in the guidelines, practitioners in the field would benefit from further assistance when advocating to library and institutional administration for resources appropriate to meet the needs of their students and faculty.

### CONCLUSION

Distance librarianship is a multifaceted endeavor; the challenges and needs reported here

reflect this diversity. Issues related to information technology, instruction/information literacy, collaboration with faculty, and outreach are consistent with other studies and suggest the need for ongoing attention. Since other areas of the profession face many of the same issues, distance librarians need to collaborate and adapt new technologies and skills to the unique needs of distance learners.

Distance librarianship has grown dramatically over the last twenty-five years, and the profession has developed a series of tools to support it. The Distance Learning Section has supported the growth and refinement of standards, professional literature, and programs, becoming an effective organization for those able to devote the time and energy to this professional community. However, many distance learning librarians have limited time to address these issues, and may not always be able to take full advantage of the wide array of professional resources available. Greater knowledge about current resources (e.g., the OFFCAMP list and the DLS website), continued development of new tools (e.g., the Wiki-based research bibliography and the ALA Communities initiative), and the deployment of more distance technology (including virtual conferences and online professional development courses) may be able to address some of these needs.

In addition to the growth in online learning for distance students, academic programs are increasingly adopting online technologies for on-campus students as well. As "on-campus" students demand more remote services, collaboration with other areas of the profession and adapting new services to distance learners should be profitable avenues for distance learning librarians and their organizations to explore.

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APPENDIX

TABLE A.1  Major Job Responsibilities

| Category of Job Responsibility | Number of Librarians *(n = 270)* |
|---|---|
| Reference / Instruction | 161   (60%) |
| Distance Library Services | 131   (49%) |
| Interlibrary Loan | 33   (12%) |
| Collection Development | 83   (31%) |
| Library Automation / Systems | 31   (11%) |
| Web Design | 45   (17%) |
| Library Administration | 104   (39%) |
| Technical Services | 25   (9%) |
| Other | 49   (18%) |

TABLE A.2  Administration/Funding of Distance Library Services

| Funding Source for Distance Library Services | Number of Libraries *(n = 269)* |
|---|---|
| Entirely administered and funded by the library | 175   (65%) |
| Partially funded by a distance learning unit | 36   (13%) |
| Completely funded by a distance learning unit | 14   (5%) |
| Not applicable | 24   (9%) |
| Other | 20   (7%) |

TABLE A.3  ALA Division Membership in Addition to ACRL

| ALA Division | Librarians Reporting Membership<br>*(n = 261)* |
|---|---|
| Reference and User Services Association | 60    (23%) |
| Library Administration and Management Association | 50    (19%) |
| Library Information Technology Association | 50    (19%) |
| Association for Library Collections and Technical Services | 21    (8%) |
| Other ALA Divisions | 24    (9%) |
| None or Don't Know | 140    (52%) |

TABLE A.4  Attendance at ALA meetings

| ALA Event | Number of Librarians Attending<br>*(n = 266)* |
|---|---|
| Boston, January 2005 | 78    (29%) |
| Orlando, June 2004 | 94    (35%) |
| San Diego, January 2004 | 67    (25%) |
| Toronto, June 2003 | 63    (23%) |
| None in the last two years | 74    (27%) |
| Never | 63    (24%) |

TABLE A.5  Attendance at DLS events (ALA Attendees only)

| Attended DLS Event | Number of Librarians<br>*(n = 130)* |
|---|---|
| Yes | 67    (52%) |
| No | 56    (43%) |
| Unsure | 5    (3%) |

TABLE A.6  Attendance at Distance Learning Related Conferences or Continuing Education Events (Other than ALA Annual Meetings)

| Conference or Program (outside of ALA Meetings) | Number of Librarians Attending (n = 246) |
|---|---|
| None | 120  (49%) |
| OCLS | 44  (18%) |
| ACRL | 23  (9%) |
| State, regional or local | 31  (13%) |
| ACRL online course | 11  (4%) |
| Distance Learning (Madison or Vancouver) | 7  (3%) |
| EDUCAUSE | 7  (3%) |
| Online course (not ACRL) | 7  (3%) |
| Virtual Reference Desk | 5  (2%) |
| Blended Librarian | 3  (1%) |
| Blackboard Conference/Training | 2  (1%) |
| Computers in Libraries | 2  (1%) |
| Internet Librarian | 2  (1%) |
| MERLOT | 2  (1%) |
| Other conferences/sessions mentioned by only one respondent | 23  (9%) |

TABLE A.7  Desired Topics for DLS Programs and Discussions

| Desired Topic for DLS Program or Discussion | Number of Librarians<br>*(n = 236)* |
|---|---|
| Management/Administrative Issues | 24   (10%) |
| Assessment | 19   (8%) |
| Keeping up with Best Practices and Current Research | 39   (17%) |
| Working with Faculty | 33   (14%) |
| Information Technology | 60   (25%) |
| Instruction & Information Literacy | 48   (20%) |
| Availability of Resources (Budget, Staff, Time) | 7   (3%) |
| Collections | 22   (9%) |
| Relationships with Units Outside of the Library (Administration, Distance Learning, etc.) | 12   (5%) |
| Outreach and Marketing | 43   (18%) |
| Not Applicable / Don't Know/ None | 21   (9%) |
| Other Categories | 13   (6%) |

TABLE A.8  Suggestions to Enhance DLS Membership

| Suggested Enhancement | Number of Librarians *(n = 170)* |
|---|---|
| More information on current practices, best practices, general advice, and tips | 42   (25%) |
| More of the same | 36   (21%) |
| Don't know | 21   (12%) |
| More online workshops, online training, online meetings | 14   (8%) |
| Networking | 12   (7%) |
| Professional development opportunities | 9   (5%) |
| Reviews of research, technology | 8   (5%) |
| Research | 5   (3%) |
| More regional/local programs | 5   (3%) |
| More on instruction and information literacy issues | 5   (3%) |
| Other | 120   (71%) |

TABLE A.9  Means of Staying Current with DLS News and Events

| Means of Staying Current with Section | Number of Librarians *( n = 267 )* |
|---|---|
| DLS newsletter | 216   (81%) |
| Off-Camp listserv | 108   (40%) |
| By attending DLS meetings at Midwinter and Annual | 62   (23%) |
| I don't know what the section is doing | 35   (13%) |
| Other | 15   (6%) |

ENDNOTE

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[1] OFFCAMP-L is an independent e-mail discussion list and is not owned or moderated by the American

Library Association (ALA) or The Association of College & Research Libraries (ACRL).  Nevertheless,

Distance Learning Section (DLS) members and nonmembers have employed it extensively to

communicate ideas about distance learning and librarianship.  It is frequently used to announce DLS

programs and to discuss section issues.  Archive available at http://listserv.utk.edu/archives/offcamp.html